For Renaissance writers and humanists, the term "Macedonians" did not refer to a distinct, self-governing modern nation or a unified ethnic group. Instead, the term was understood through a blend of **classical antiquity, geographic overlaying, and contemporary ethno-linguistic observations** under Ottoman rule.

When a 16th-century Italian author wrote about "Macedonia," their worldview was shaped by specific cultural and historical frameworks:

1. The Classical and Humanist Mapping

The primary education of Renaissance writers was rooted in Greco-Roman texts (such as Strabo, Ptolemy, and Livy).

- **A Regional, Not National Label:** "Macedonia" was a prestigious Roman provincial border rather than an ethnicity.
- To humanists, anyone living within those ancient borders could be loosely termed "Macedonian" in a geographic sense.
- In fact, some Renaissance texts from Venice and Rome went so far as to geographically conflate or alternate terms like **Macedonians, Epirotes, and Albanians** because their historical boundaries heavily overlapped in the Western Balkans. [1]

2. The Contemporary Slavic Reality ("Bulgaria")

While the author used the historical-geographic label "Macedonia," they simultaneously paired it with **"Bulgaria"** because they were fully aware of the local demographic reality on the ground.

- **The Ethno-Linguistic Catch-All:** Following the collapse of the medieval Bulgarian and Serbian empires and the subsequent Ottoman conquest, Western European chroniclers used "Bulgarians" as a broad ethno-geographic term for the South Slavic-speaking Christian populations inhabiting the central and southern Balkans (including regions like Polog, Ohrid, and Skopje).
- By specifying that the Polog valley is a part of *"Macedonia & Bulgaria,"* the text bridges classical geography with contemporary medieval demographics. It signals to the reader that the land is geographically situated in ancient Macedonia, but ethnically/politically tied to the South Slavic (Bulgarian) sphere of the Balkans.

3. The Religious and Imperial Flattening

Because the Ottoman Empire had absorbed the entire region, individual Balkan administrative boundaries were completely redrawn into *eyalets* and *sanjaks*. For Western Europeans observing from afar:

- The local population was often grouped simply by religion (the Christian *Rum Millet*) or broad linguistic families.
- Local rulers (like the Lord of Polog mentioned in your text) were understood as regional Christian princes ruling over a mixed, fragmented frontier.

Summary

To a Renaissance writer, a "Macedonian" was **a Christian inhabitant of the classical geographic region of Macedonia**, which during the late-medieval and early-modern periods was heavily populated by and identified with South Slavic (Bulgarian) language and culture.

If you are tracking how these geographic terms shifted over time, we can look into **early modern Italian maps of the Balkans** or discuss **how other Renaissance biographies of Skanderbeg categorized local identities**.